

**warm**

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## warm by richietosier (forestjoshua)

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**Genre:** A tiny bit of fluff, Angst, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, M/M, bill also has a crush, bill is a sad boy

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**Summary:**

*Bill is lost in thought, striding forward with his long legs, clutching the straps of his backpack and muttering a poem to ease his stutter, which still isn't gone and won't be any time soon. He's so lost in thought that he doesn't notice someone joining him. When he hears steps falling next to him, he first assumes Eddie, or maybe Bev, has caught up with him, but when turns his head to look, he sees the smiling face of Mike Hanlon.*

*Mike has a dimple in his left cheek that Bill has never paid attention to before, and for some reason it causes a blush to rise on his cheeks*

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*After.* Bill doesn't remember *after*. It all turns to haze, which turns to nothing, slips through his fingertips like ash. Taken by time.

*And something else.*

He remembers - if he tries, if he tries *really* hard - the feeling of terror. The feeling of his legs turning numb, but also the feeling of determination.

Something lurking, not only in the dark, but in broad daylight as well.

And then, *after*, Bill just needs some peace of mind. He needs a place, and time, for it all to disappear. To be normal again. As normal as it can be for a stuttering freak.

He's walking home, alone. Why alone, he doesn't know. He had left the school and suddenly been alone. There's usually someone walking with him - most often Eddie. Or Richie. Richie is a great distraction with his inability to shut up. If Richie speaks loud enough, Bill can't think about the little brother he has lost.

Except he doesn't think about Georgie that often, not anymore. Why would he? He's dead. He'll never grow up to wear Bill's old clothes or play with his old toys.

*We'd have to sell them*, it occurs to Bill. The clothes sooner than the toys, since Bill is growing fast. Bill would have to pack them himself, in cardboard boxes, and Eddie could help. Then Bill would have to carry them in the basement, and maybe months later his mother would notice the boxes, stacked in some corner with the words 'Bill's old clothes' written on them in Bill's shaky handwriting, or Eddie's neat. She would sell or donate them. Or maybe not.

Maybe Bill could give them to Eddie, he was still really small. Eddie had always been like another little brother to him. But Eddie's mother probably wouldn't want Eddie wearing them.

Bill is lost in thought, striding forward with his long legs, clutching the straps of his backpack and muttering a poem to ease his stutter, which still isn't gone and won't be any time soon. He's so lost in thought that he doesn't notice someone joining him. When he hears steps falling next to him, he first assumes Eddie, or maybe Bev, has caught up with him, but when turns his head to look, he sees the smiling face of Mike Hanlon.

Mike has a dimple in his left cheek that Bill has never paid attention to before, and for some reason it causes a blush to rise on his cheeks. Mike is wearing a worn out red shirt, with holes on the elbows. His shoes are dirty. Bill notices that Mike's hair has grown. He has lovely curls now, soft and brown, and they look like a halo when sunlight hits them.

"Hi, M-M-Mike," Bill mutters. His cheeks feel very warm, and not from the sun. Bill looks down at his feet.

"Hi Bill," says Mike, "Going home?"

Bill nods, and after that they're two quiet boys, striding down Derry's old streets. The silence around them isn't uncomfortable. It comforts them both.

And Bill is still so lost in thought that only when Mike speaks, he realizes he's nowhere near home.

"Did you mean to follow me all the way up here?" Mike asks. He's grinning, but it's benevolent.

"Um," Bill manages to say. They're standing near a field, and Bill can actually see Mike's family's farm in the distance.

"It's okay!" says Mike, "Stay, please, if you want."

Bill stays. Mike signals him to follow him, and Bill does, with cautious steps that turn more and more sure the closer they get to the house. Bill follows Mike all the way inside, to the kitchen where they find Mike's mother.

Mike goes to hug her, but Bill stays at the doorway, warily eyeing the scene that looks so different from his homelife. His mother is cold

and distant, towards Bill, towards his father. She wouldn't be if Georgie was still there. Georgie brought out the warmth in everyone. He was the soul of the Denbrough family, the gentle fire that has now been smothered.

*Who killed him?* It feels like Bill should know - like he had found out, but then forgotten.

Watching Mike hug his mother makes Bill feel lonely and abandoned. It makes him feel cold, starting from the tips of his toes and fingers, spreading through his body, freezing his heart. He's about to turn around and run, leave before he shatters like an ice statue, when Mike's mother spots him.

"Mikey! Did you bring a friend?" she exclaims, and smiles. Mike has her smile, Bill notes - beautiful, radiating and contagious, so contagious that even Bill's frozen lips turn upwards. She approaches Bill, and Bill offers his hand.

"It's n-nice to m-m-meet you Mrs. Hanlon," Bill says, shaking her hand shyly. He curses his stutter, but Mrs. Hanlon is still smiling. "I'm William D-Denbrough."

Something lights up in Mrs. Hanlon's warm brown eyes - recognition, and also joy. Her smile widens, showing a row of straight white teeth.

"William! I've heard a lot about you!" She drops Bill's hand, and pulls him into a hug instead. In her warm embrace, Bill tries to remember the last time his *own* mother hugged him. He closes his eyes and feels her thin phantom arms around his frame, her dry lips pressing a kiss to his cheek. It's been over a year, maybe two. Bill trembles.

"Honey, are you alright? You're shaking," Mrs. Hanlon says, holding him at arm's length now. She has a look of concern on her face, identical to Mike's, who's standing behind her.

Bill snaps out of it. "I'm f-f-f-f-" *Fine* . He blushes, eyes downcast. He can't finish the word. "Just c-cold."

"Your jumper is too small for you," Mrs. Hanlon points out, grabbing

the thin gray material, holding it between her thumb and forefinger. "Why don't you borrow one of Mikey's? It's going to be much colder when you head back home."

"No, M-Mrs. Hanlon-"

"I insist!" she interrupts kindly, touching his shoulder. Bill barely feels the touch, it's only a brush, but it melts Bill. Water is dripping down his shoulder, puddling next to his feet.

"Mikey doesn't have any chores today," Mrs. Hanlon adds.

"I don't?" Mike smiles. There's that dimple again.

"Go find that jumper. Play with your friend," Mrs. Hanlon says, setting her palm between her son's shoulder blades and gently pushing him forward, towards Bill. "The dinner's in twenty minutes, come set the table then!"

"We will!" shouts Mike, taking Bill's hand, sending an electric pulse up his arm. Mike's hand is warm, it melts Bill's entire arm. It surprises him how soft his hand actually is. Bill would have assumed his hands would be calloused from work - from weeding the benches and sweeping the floor.

They go to Mike's room, Mike pressing the door shut behind them. Bill stays standing next to the door, unsure what to do, what to say, as Mike goes to the drawer and pulls out a jumper, tossing it to Bill who catches it.

Bill drops his backpack, then pulls off his shirt, letting it fall to the floor, and puts on Mike's jumper. It fits him perfectly. Bill likes the blue color, and it's warm, and soft, and smells of hay, but that doesn't bother Bill. It smells of *Mike*, and Bill likes that. Not that he's admitting it out loud, ever. That would be... Well, boys aren't supposed to think that way.

He bends down to pick up his abandoned jumper that looks so miserable bundled on Mike's bedroom floor. It's thin, ugly and dull gray, with weird dark stains on one sleeve.

"I think you should throw it away," Mike says, "It's certainly lived its

days.”

Clutching the jumper, Bill suddenly remembers when it was brand new. It was the time when his mother would still choose what Bill was going to wear at school. The jumper had once felt as soft and warm as Mike’s jumper now. Bill remembers wearing it when its sleeves were still slightly too long. He remembers his mother, touching his chin, smiling, and telling him he looked handsome.

There are tears in his eyes. He squeezes the fabric one more time before stashing the jumper away in his backpack. He thinks of all his clothes he shouldn’t wear anymore. He remembers the cardboard boxes, and makes a quick reminder to himself to actually ask Eddie to help him next weekend. They’d have to reserve a box for clothes that should be thrown away. Not all Bill’s clothes are to be worn again.

And, of course, he’d have to ask his mother for new clothes.

“Are you alright?” Mike asks, his voice low.

Rapidly, Bill blinks the tears away, but he can’t stop the snuffle. “I’m good,” he assures Mike. Mike doesn’t press, and Bill is thankful.

They end up studying for a test that is approaching next week, lying on their stomachs on the hard floor. Mike reads a chapter aloud, while Bill takes notes. He likes Mike’s voice, it’s calming and slow. Bill wishes he could speak like that, without stutter interrupting his every other word, at least.

After a while, they go to the dining room to set the table, as Mrs. Hanlon had asked them to. First, Mike puts down the plates and Bill follows with flatware and glasses. It’s Mike’s mother who brings the food - the caldron full of potatoes, the vegetables, and the lamb.

Mrs. Hanlon goes to find Mike’s father, leaving Mike and Bill alone.

“We can sit at the table,” Mike says, sitting down. Bill goes to sit next to him.

Five minutes later Mr. and Mrs. Hanlon arrive. Bill is about to stand up, but Mr. Hanlon gestures him to sit down. “It’s nice to finally meet you, William,” he says. His voice is similar to Mike’s - it seems as

Mike inherited all the nice features from his parents. Bill wonders what's the case with him. How much of his mother people see in him, how much of his father? Bill himself can't really tell.

Georgie had had his mother's laugh, and his hair had turned curly in the rain, like his father's.

"N-nice to meet you t-too, Mr. Hanlon," Bill says, proud that he managed not to stutter that much.

When everyone is sat down, they say grace. Eyes closed, hearing the warm murmur of Mr. Hanlon's voice calms Bill. After grace, they dig in. Bill had thought that the dinner would pass in quiet like it did at home. He always ate quickly, then whispered a rushed 'thank you' to the ears that wouldn't listen, and left to continue doing whatever he had been doing before dinner.

"So," Mrs. Hanlon begins brightly, "How was school, boys?"

Her voice actually startles Bill, and he almost chokes on a potato.

Sparing a glance at Bill, Mike answers, "School was alright. I didn't get much homework."

"How about you, William?" Mrs. Hanlon asks Bill.

"I didn't get m-much h-h-homework, either," Bill says.

"Well, that's good for you. More time for fun, then," Mrs. Hanlon says, "What were you up to in Mikey's room?"

"We studied for a test. That's next week," Mike says.

Mr. Hanlon chuckles. "Well aren't you two responsible boys," he points out.

Mrs. Hanlon asks Bill questions, like what's his favorite class in school and what he wants to be when he grows up. Then, Mike's parents fall into an easy conversation with each other, which is warm-toned, laced with gentle teasing and laughter. Bill is almost hypnotized by it, having not witnessed his parents exchange more than a couple words at a time in *months*. They wouldn't have this sort



of kind banter. They wouldn't even discuss mundane things.

They used to. They used to be almost like Mike's parents, talking and teasing. Bill actually enjoyed dinner time, he'd sit next to Georgie, like he's now sitting next to Mike, and follow his parents' conversation, like he's now following Mr. and Mrs. Hanlon's.

A lump forms in his throat when his mind wanders to those happy times. He sets down his fork, trying to fight the tears.

"Bill, are you alright?" comes Mike's concerned voice. Bill feels his friend taking his hand under the table. Bill's breath hitches, and then, he can't *stop*. Tears spill over.

The conversation has ceased. Bill's hand shakes in Mike's hold, his lips shake, too, fighting back sobs. He stares at his plate and the half finished food, afraid to look up.

"Sweetheart, what's wrong?" Mrs. Hanlon asks, her voice very thin.

"Mom, excuse us, I think Bill and I will go to my room for a little while," Mike says.

"Right, of course," says Mrs. Hanlon, and Mike leads them away, without saying another word. When they reach his room, Mike wraps up Bill in a hug, lets Bill sob into his shoulder and wet his shirt.

Bill, an ice sculpture of a boy, doesn't shatter. He melts into a puddle.

When Bill's sobs die down, Mike asks, "What happened? You can talk to me."

Bill snuffles one more time. He's too embarrassed to tell the whole truth. "I w-was just thinking about G-G-G-"

"Georgie," Mike whispers, understanding smile appearing on his face. "That's alright. You're allowed to mourn, still."

Bill nods, trying to wipe the tears off with the sleeve of his sweater.

"Do you want to go back and finish dinner?" Mike asks quietly. He's holding both of Bill's hands, caressing over Bill's knuckles with his

thumb.

“I- I’m not really h-hungry anymore,” Bill admits, “B-b-but I d-don’t want to be r-r-rude.”

Letting go of Bill’s hand, Mike cups his face. “You’re not being rude. My parents will understand.”

“I- I think I w-want to go h-h-home now,” Bill says, even though he hates being home. His home is cold, and this place is warm.

Mike nods. “Stay in my room,” he says, “I’ll talk to my parents.” Then he leans forward, pressing a light kiss to Bill’s forehead.

Bill is left standing dumbfounded in the middle of the room. His lips twitch, willing to smile. His skin tingles where Mike’s lips had touched him, and he’s blushing as deep red as his hair.

Mike comes back, only a minute later.

“My father will drive you home,” he says. He smiles, and it’s a special smile.

Although there are still tear stains on Bill’s cheeks, his face breaks into a full grin.

### **Author's Note:**

what is a consistent writing style....

[my tumblr](#)

hope you enjoyed!